Approaches

Research has shown that social and emotional development can be fostered, and social and emotional skills, attitudes, and behaviors can be taught using a variety of approaches:

- Free-standing lessons designed to enhance students' social and emotional competence explicitly.
- Teaching practices such as cooperative learning and project-based learning, which promote SEL.
- Integration of SEL an academic curriculum such as language arts, math, social studies, or health.
- Organizational strategies that promote SEL as a schoolwide initiative that creates a climate and culture conducive to learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEL Approaches</th>
<th>Short-Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Behavioral/Academic Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit SEL Skills Instruction</td>
<td>SEL Skill Acquisition: Five Competence Areas</td>
<td>Positive Social Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Instructional Practices</td>
<td>Improved Attitudes: Self, Others, Learning, and Schools</td>
<td>Fewer Conduct Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration with Academic Curriculum Areas</td>
<td>Enhanced Learning Environment: Supportive, Engaging, and Participatory</td>
<td>Less Emotional Distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational, Culture, and Climate Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved Academic Performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effective SEL approaches often incorporate four elements represented by the acronym SAFE:

- **Sequenced**: Connected and coordinated activities to foster skills development.
- **Active**: Active forms of learning to help students master new skills and attitudes.
- **Focused**: A component that emphasizes developing personal and social skills.
- **Explicit**: Targeting specific social and emotional skills.

Ideally schools will use SAFE approaches to support the social and emotional development of their students. For example:

- Children can be taught through modeling and coaching to recognize how they feel or how someone else might be feeling.
- Prompting the use of a conflict-resolution skill and using dialoguing to guide students through the steps can be an effective approach to helping them apply a skill in a new situation.
- Through class meetings students can practice group decision-making and setting classroom rules.
- Students can learn cooperation and teamwork through participation in team sports and games.
- Students can deepen their understanding of a current or historical event by analyzing it through a set of questions based on a problem-solving model.
- Cross-age mentoring, in which a younger student is paired with an older one, can be effective in building self-confidence, a sense of belonging, and enhancing academic skills.
- Having one member of a pair describe a situation to his partner and having the partner repeat what he or she heard is an effective tool in teaching reflective listening.

---

**CASEL's funders strengthen the impact of our work.**